

SEVENTH DAY

Thursday 1 December 2022

DRAFT HANSARD

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SEVENTH DAY

Thursday 1 December 2022

The Speaker, (**Mr Job Pomat**) took the Chair at 10 a.m.

There being no quorum present, the Speaker stated that he would resume the Chair after the ringing of the Bells.

Sitting suspended.

The Assistant Speaker (**Mr Agena Gamai**) took the Chair at 10.50 a.m., and invited the Governor of West New Britain, **Honourable Sasindran Muthuvel** to say Prayers.

‘The silent waters of the Ocean, the contaminated drains, the stinking ponds, the stagnant lakes, from anywhere, when water evaporates into above and comes down again as rains it becomes a pure drinking water. Similarly, when men connect with the force above, the self-purification happens. When our prayers go up, our blessings come down.

Dear Lord, can you not see us here? Please forgive us for the sins we have done. Please help us and guide us now. Please bless us all with love for you so we remember your lotus feet. We feel your presence and we feel your grace and we feel your radiance. You are our source of faith and strength and you are our path and destination. Nothing of us but everything of you. Lead us higher. Lead us deeper. Lead us beyond and lead us to you. Amen.’

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VISITORS – STATEMENT BY THE ASSISTANT SPEAKER

Mr ASSISTANT SPEAKER – Honourable Members, we have visitors, members of the Ambunti-Drekikir District Development Authority, members of the Public Accounts Committee from Bougainville House of Representatives.

On behalf of the National Parliament, I welcome you all,

02/07

QUESTIONS

Accommodation for Police Personnel

Mr CASMIRO AIA – Thank you Mr Assistant Speaker for recognizing the people of Goilala to speak on this Floor.

I want to direct my questions to the Minister for Internal Security. The background information before I ask the questions is that, we all know that the biggest discussion on print media and other forms of media is on law and order. On the eve of that, the Government is serious in combating law and order issue by planning to recruit 500 men and women starting next year. My good Minister, we have a huge problem on hand with the police men and women in the respective police barracks across the country. I am also not qualified to talk because my province doesn't have police headquarter and even a police barracks.

Before I ask my two questions, I want to highlight a bit on Morata Barracks which is approximately one kilometer from Parliament House. And the sad stage is that it was built to accommodate five single police men and women to a room. But now they decided to get married and have their own families and are still living in those single rooms all cramped up with the other colleagues' families as well. This is a big problem which is putting pressure on the department.

Mr ASSISTANT SPEAKER – Honourable Member go straight to the question.

Mr CASMIRO AIA – Thank you Assistant Speaker, I thought I will highlight the background information which might assist the Minister on the importance of my questions.

(1) Where will the new recruits be accommodated after completing their training at Bomana Police College?

Minister there was a government intervention program introduced some years back basing on Police Modernization Program.

03/07

Mr Assistant Speaker, this program was introduced by the Government to look into the barracks and problems associated with the police but this program unfortunately, must be shelved away somewhere collecting dust.

So, can the Minister revisit this program or if he is aware, can he inform Parliament on the status of this Police Modernization Program?

Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker.

Mr PETER TSIAMALILI – Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. I would like to thank the Member for Goilala for his questions and I will go straight into answering them.

Mr Assistant Speaker, we all know that this talk about beefing up the police force is a holistic understanding of entry and exit. Whilst we are looking at recruiting more policemen and women into the force, we must also cater for the exit of the current manpower.

So, now that you raised the issue on housing, this has been captured as part of our plan for the entry of new policemen and the exit of the old. One of the biggest challenges is to be able to cater for the welfare of the men and women in the force.

I can assure that in this plan that will be carried out in the next four to five years of our Government, these are the fundamental areas of work carried out in not only beefing up our force but ensuring that the welfare of men and women in the force are being taken care of.

I do fully understand the challenge we have, there in a white paper that I have circulated, it talks about housing welfare of the staff that we are going to be recruiting.

Part of the modernization of the police force, I believe this was a discussion around really modernising our Police Force. So, the current white paper that I have circulated, hopefully has captured these two questions that you have asked.

I also thank each and every one of you for putting all your effort in putting together this policing plan because that is fundamental and it is very important for us to have full visibility of how we are going to overcome these challenges in the Law and Order sector.

Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker.

Honours and Award System

Mr JOESPH LELANG – Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker, for allowing me to speak. I would like to direct these questions to the Prime Minister which relate to Papua New Guinea's honours system, known as the Honours of Papua New Guinea and the British Imperial Honours.

The recognition of our citizens and leaders from all walks of life by awarding them for their services is the least the country can do to recognize their selfless services to their communities, societies and country.

Mr Assistant Speaker, the administrations of the processes, honours and the awards are set out in the regulations of the orders and this regulation is very strict as it does not allow for the politicization of the award system meaning that the Council, established by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, is supposed to operate freely of political and bureaucracy influences and as per the letters of patent instrument, His Majesty, the King is the sovereign and head of both the orders of Papua New Guinea and the Imperial Honours.

My questions are as follows;

(1) Can you confirm or deny that Buckingham Palace has suspended the honors and award systems to Papua New Guinea amidst certain concerns?

(2) Is this part of the reasons relating to the removal of previous council members and chairman by Cabinet in 2020, without following the regulations?

These actions have now exposed the Council to the whims of Cabinet and therefore political influence on something that concerns Buckingham Palace and also against the regulations for and whether the current make up and composition of the Council no longer meets the composition prescribed in the regulation.

04/07

Mr Assistant Speaker, this is an important issue since the constitution and the regulation of the orders were drafted with Buckingham Palace.

(3) Does the Prime Minister have any plans to rectify this matter, if indeed, this is the case?

Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. I want to congratulate you on occupying the Chair this morning. Let me appreciate the question from the Opposition Leader on the honours and awards process and procedures.

Let me assure him, this House and our country, that there is no political interference in the process of the honours and awards programs. A few years back, pre-dating 2020, there were some concerns on the manner in which the awards were processed. At the board level, we had a look at the entire structure and it is still distant from political interference and control.

The Awards Committee is headed by a representative from the Council of Churches and there are various bodies that sit in the honours and awards committee. We have looked at that and it is far from political control. The board is a totally independent body.

When nominations are given for exemplary and distinguished citizens to be considered for awards, that independent body checks and it comes back to the Prime Minister, who gives the final clearance for the names to be processed. The independence of the process is always maintained.

There were some concerns a few years back, but we rectified the full independence process and there is no political interference in the entire process. It was restored to what it was before or should be and is now functional.

To satisfy the Opposition Leader, I will re-look and get a written reply to him. Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker.

Mr SOLEN LOIFA – Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker, for giving this time to the people of Menyamya. My questions are directed to the Minister for State Enterprises. If he is not here, I will direct it to the Prime Minister.

Mr ASSISTANT SPEAKER – Honourable Member, the Prime Minister is here so he can respond to your question. Please proceed.

Increase in charges and airfares by Air Niugini

Mr SOLEN LOIFA – Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. It is almost Christmas and the general public will be travelling back to their home provinces for the holidays. Many of us use air transport, particularly Air Niugini, when we travel. Air Niugini is now charging a lot of fees in this Christmas period. For instance, they are charging penalty and cash handing fees on the travelling public thus causing a lot of inconvenience.

Some of the people that are travelling, live in villages and do not have accounts to use for purchasing tickets when they want to travel. They are asked by Air Niugini to use other peoples account to purchase tickets, which results in extra fees being charged. It is causing a lot of problem for people when they want to use air transport. I just noticed that Air Niugini's airfares have increased in this Christmas period.

My question to the State Enterprises Minister and the Prime Minister is;

(1) What is the Ministry of SOE doing to help our people who wishes to travel in this Christmas period?

We say that Air Niugini is a State-owned enterprise, but the State is the people. We should be helping them, not causing problems for them by charging them excess amounts. If this is a company of our people, we should be helping them when they wish to travel.

Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker.

05/07

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. I would like to thank the Member for Menyamya for raising a good question on behalf of his people and the general public. I will advise Air Niugini to look into this issue.

In my view, Air Niugini has a cost structure and there are requirements of them to operate at a certain level. They may not be there to unnecessarily reduce the price if the cost structure is such that they cannot reduce the price, but if there is any way in as far as giving relieve to the traveling public is concerned, they can do that. We will try and ask Air Niugini, but it is up to their management to control the cost of travel.

There are associated fees on the tickets and there were some suggestions made earlier on some of those fees the charged. On those fees, we ask relevant Ministers, like the Minister for Civil Aviation, Minister for Transport and Minister for State Enterprise to look at those fees that are associated with the tickets. We can look into this, but to keep Air Niugini running, ticketing costs are some of the things that we cannot influence. If there is any space for us to assist, we can assist. I give peace to the Member for asking this question. I will get the Minister for Civil Aviation and the Minister for State Enterprises to work together and look into not just the cost of Air Niugini and ticket alone, but the total package related to the cost of one travel, where some more fees are also added to that cost.

Thank you.

The Connect PNG Program

Ms RUFINA PETER – Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister for Works and Highways.

Mr Assistant Speaker, in light of the continuous land grabbing and law and order situation in Port Moresby and Central Province, the Central Provincial Government and the people of Central Province strongly oppose the Connect PNG Program insofar as it relates to connecting the missing links.

However, my government and the people of Central Province fully support the Connect PNG Program as it relates to the maintenance and upgrading of the roads in Central Province identified in the Connect PNG Program.

Mr Assistant Speaker, this is in light of the continuous land grabbing and law and order problems in Port Moresby and Central Province.

Mr Assistant Speaker, my questions to the good Minister are as follows:

(1) Is there a process involved in scheduling of work in connecting the missing links in the Connect PNG Program?

(2) If there is a process involve, does it involve dialog between National Government and Provincial Government concerned?

Mr Assistant Speaker, I raise these two important questions because as Governor for Central Province, I know that my people are not ready for the connection of the missing links from the Highlands to Central Province through Hela Province and the Gulf Province into Central Province.

Mr Assistant Speaker, given that Central Province is not ready, connecting the stated missing link will most likely result in negative consequences significantly outweighing the benefits for the people of Central Province.

Whilst I understand the importance of the Connect PNG program, I believe it is prudent to maintain and upgrade existing roads within the province to the national highway status and to dialogue with provincial governments on the readiness for connecting the missing links.

Thank you.

06/07

Mr SOLAN MIRISIM - I would like to say thank you the Governor for Central Province for your question regarding the Connect PNG Program. We have two females in Parliament, the Governor for Central Province and the Member for Rai Coast.

Connect PNG is an initiative of the current Government with the objective of linking Papua New Guinea, not just to maintain missing links on main highways and roads. It must connect one province to another, one district to another so that the road link will be to all parts of Papua New Guinea. From Wutung to Vanimo, to Aitape to Wewak, to Angoram to Bogia, to Madang and then Lae and to Ebo coming down to Gulf to the Hiritano Highway, to the Magi Highway and then Milne Bay. Connect PNG is not just to maintain the roads in provinces. The main aim of Connect PNG is to link Papua New Guinea.

The process is underway and we have engineers with the help of ADB who are working with the districts and provinces to help design the roads. We have asked all provinces involved to be ready for this process, For the provinces who are not yet ready we have asked all members of those provinces and districts to get their people ready for this program.

The Connect PNG program and laws were enacted in Parliament. Therefore, the program is designed for the whole country. The main aim is to have the mainland of Papua New Guinea

linked. We have processes, programs under Connect PNG and divisions who are following set guidelines for this program. We have issues such as land grabbing, landowner issues and also paying land compensations. We are getting the people ready for this program to go ahead.

I would like to commend the Marape-Rosso Government for their commitment to the Connect PNG program.

07/07

Government has allocated funds for the Connect PNG program in the 2023 National Budget. The Honourable Governor mentioned that the roads starting from Herbou down to Hiritano and from Magi to Milne Bay, we will fix it. The Central Provincial Government needs to work closely with the National Department of Works to deliver all those projects. It is our duty to ensure that this service is delivered to the people.

Economy will grow when we have good roads network. This is the reason why this Government is opening up road accessibility to the economic corridors so that economy will grow. That's why we are following the due process to connect all those roads.

In 2019 when the Marape Government took office, we have funded a lot of projects in the Connect PNG road programs. I want to assure the Honourable Governor that we are following due process. In terms of land grabbing, we are paying compensation to build roads and apart from many other things we are doing.

I appeal to the good Governor and her Provincial Government to work more closely with us to ensure that those major work infrastructures are delivered to the people Central of Province. With that, thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker.

Supplementary Question

Works – Need for more consultation

Mr DOUGLAS TOMURIESA – Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. I think the good Governor raised two very important questions that need to be answered.

(1) Consultation between the Department of Works and the provinces.

(2) What is the priority of his Department and the provinces.? In the provinces there are priority roads that need to be connected.

If there's no consultation between the Department and the provinces, then it is left in limbo. The Minister is doing a fantastic job but it needs more consultation with the provinces to ensure that the priorities of the provinces and districts are built into Connect PNG.

The road that is built, what are the economic outcomes for that road? Is the road ending up where there are no social and business activities? Because in return, this road must sustain itself through some economy activity.

Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker.

Mr SOLAN MIRISIM – Thank you, my lenient Deputy Opposition Leader for raising these two questions.

I have not been briefed that Connect PNG targets the main highways, missing links in the provinces and districts and infrastructures. Now we are transferring powers down to the provincial governments and districts to look after their roads within their province to link it to the main Connect PNG roads. We are also identifying provinces with missing links and we are funding it.

The Governors and the open members need to identify, which roads come under provincial government, districts and the Connect PNG. So, that our officers in the districts, provincial, and national Works, work together to identify missing links in each province.

08/07

This Budget and this government have put more money back to the districts and the provinces especially in road infrastructures. We will debate more on this tomorrow but a lot of funds have been injected into the provinces and the district roads. The department of Works has also identified economic roads; the missing links that should connect to the main roads. The governors must identify the most economical road and submit the name to the Connect PNG program. So, we need the governors to consult us on this issue.

So, for most of the missing links, the demand is very high and the funding received to implement the project is insufficient. So, it is good to identify 10 or more road projects work on it within three years and then select another 10 to work on again. So, we have this in the program we have put together. Thank you.

Mr JOHN BOITA – Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. My supplementary question is directed to the Minister for Works and Highways.

(1) Can the Minister inform us which roads come under the different categories for funding such as the Connect PNG Program, ‘missing link’ roads, the provincial government roads and the district roads?

Mr ASSISTANT SPEAKER – Honourable Member, you just raised a new question. Resume your sit.

Mr John Boita– Point of Order! My question was directed to the Minister for Works and Highway.

Mr ASSISTANT SPEAKER – Honourable Member resume your seat because you asked a new question.

Mr RICKY MORRIS – Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker, for giving me this opportunity –

Mr Richard Masere – Point of Order! Mr Assistant Speaker I am in support of the Member for Obura-Wonenara. The question has already been asked and therefore the Speaker must respond to that question in the House. The interjection should have happened when the question was still on. He represents the people of Obura-Wonenara so Mr Minister he must be given that opportunity to respond to that question.

Mr ASSISTANT SPEAKER – Honourable Member, your point of order because he asked a new question under Supplementary Question. The Chair will give him the opportunity to raise his question later.

Mr RICKY MORRIS – Thank you Mr Assistant Speaker for giving me the opportunity. Mr Assistant Speaker, this being my first time to take the floor, I want to take the time to congratulate you and most importantly I want to thank my people of Alotau for giving me the trust and confidence to represent them.

09/07

Let me also congratulate the Prime Minister, good ministers, the Opposition Leader and all the Members of Parliament.

Mr Assistant Speaker, my questions are directed to the Minister for Oil Palm and I also congratulate him and the Prime Minister for recognizing this important industry. I want the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Labour and Immigration to take note.

Mr Assistant Speaker, the oil palm industry is a major industry in this country. And 83 per cent of our oil palm is operated by Sime Darby through New Britain Palm Oil and they have been here in the country for the last 50 years. So, at this juncture, I want to also thank the company and our industry players especially in the agriculture sector for their contribution to our nation building.

However, Mr Assistant Speaker, there are few issues that fall under the radar that I would like to highlight.

Firstly, it's in regards to the minimum wage determination that we have set under clause six that has exempted the agriculture companies and that has denied our people who work in the industry to participate in the minimum wage.

In 2014, the minimum wage under clause six was set at K3 per hour and that was to be reviewed after three years. Unfortunately, we have turned a blind eye on this and we have not adjusted that rate. The Prime Minister in his words wants to drive the agriculture industry and so we need to motivate and incentivize the people who make this industry work.

My questions to the Minister are: -

Mr ASSISTANT SPEAKER – Honourable Member, which Minister are you asking the question?

Mr RICKY MORRIS – Minister for Oil Palm.

Mr ASSISTANT SPEAKER – Okay, go ahead.

Minimum Wage Determination-Review clause

Mr RICKY MORRIS – (1) Can the Minister in consultation with the Minister for Labour and Immigration review clause six on the minimum wage determination?

The Oil Palm Industry Corporation has been an extension service provider since its inception in 1990, without any regulatory powers to regulate the industry here in PNG. It has been years foreign milling companies have become regulators in the industry, leaving the Oil Palm Industry Corporation (OPIC) which is a government body left out of the picture. The industry doesn't have any legal regulatory powers to regulate and manage the industry and its operation. The industry needs an urgent legal policy framework to govern its operations.

(1) Can the Minister assure this House as to when he plans to bring the OPIC Authority Bill and the Oil Palm Management Bill to this House for endorsement in the near future?

Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker.

Mr FRANCIS MANEKE – Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for Alotau for these very important questions.

In regard to this important industry and to this country, but prior to me answering the questions I would like to thank the Prime Minister for appointing me to be the Minister for Oil Palm. And I also want to thank my people of Nakanai for electing me in for the second time to this Honourable House.

The question asked by the Honourable Member for Alotau is appropriate in this point in time as we see the industry itself is a very old industry and has been around for over 50 plus years. And as we all know the legislation that covers the industry is only an extension service.

10/07

I would like to thank the Prime Minister and his government, for taking this opportunity to make this industry a ministry of its own, so as it is today, Oil Palm has been given the priority to improve the economy as the way forward. But at the same time in order to prosper we need to establish legislation, policy, and regulation.

I commend the Member because that is exactly the mission that we are taking today and I am working on the 100-Day Plan which includes the legislation for the industry which will involve the industry partners and relevant government institutions that will help to drive the industry forward.

Most importantly, I would like to appeal to the people of this country in regard to this industry, we all know that the future of our country will depend on how the government is really having to prioritize the industry. As we all know that we have been experiencing climate change and global warming in our country and it has greatly affected and suppressed this industry. But, we are planning to expand the development into the grassland to do more deforestation and again, we have to comply with global warming and climate change effects as a policy in our country as well. So, in order to do this, we will have to attend to the global market in regard to this very important industry and the future of our economy.

Otherwise, the question asked by the Honourable Member for Alotau is appropriate at this time but I need your support and all the other members of this House to come together for us to drive this very important industry forward. We will have to do more consultation but the legislation, policy, and regulations are halfway through.

Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker.

Kundiawa Airstrip Status

Mr FRANCIS SIUNE – Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to speak and in doing so recognizing my people of Kerowagi.

Since it is my first time to speak in this Honourable House, I take this time to thank the people of Kerowagi for their trust and confidence in me by electing me into this House to represent them in Parliament.

Mr Assistant Speaker, on behalf of the people of Kerowagi, I would also like to congratulate the Marape-Rosso Government, the ministers, and all my colleague MPs in this Eleventh Parliament. I would also like to thank the Ministers for Finance and Treasury, their departmental heads, vice ministers, and hard-working staff for framing the 2023 National Budget and successfully presenting it. It is not an easy task but you have done it well, well done.

Mr Assistant Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister for Civil Aviation and I would like the Minister for Transport to take note. My question is regarding the Kundiawa Airport, which has been closed for some years and that, there is a need to reopen this airport so that the people of Chimbu can access aviation services. Traveling to Mount Hagen and Goroka has a lot of risks involved –

11/07

(1) Does the Minister have plans to establish, revive and build airstrips around the country? Could you please re-open Kundiawa Airport for our people?

(2) Does the Chimbu Government have a plan to relocate the airport?

The Governor of Chimbu can confirm that. The propose site is Kup in Kerowagi District.

(3) Can the Minister confirm that feasibility studies were undertaken in this area in the last regime, which is this Government.

Furthermore, if the approval for the proposed site is to continue, the Governor of Chimbu and the six districts will cooperate with this Government to ensure that this vital service is established for our people.

Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker.

Mr WALTER SCHNAUBELT – Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. I would like to thank the Member for his questions. I cannot stress anymore of the importance of having airstrip operations in all our districts and provinces. This is important and is a focus of the Marape-Rosso Government.

Unfortunately, with the current saga that we have with the NAC, it is going to create some delays in getting you the appropriate information you are seeking. Please rest assured, as the Minister responsible, I want to see more airstrips and airports open, and I want to see accessibility by our people who wish to travel by air, with more convenience by everyone in our country.

I ask the good Member if he can forward me his questions in writing, so I can get an official response in writing to him. I have tried going forward to resolve the issue I have with NAC because I will need their feedback on whether we can open up the airport, or reconsider a relocation. I will also need CASAs input as well.

Be rest assured, my motivation and focus are to open up the airport as per you and your people's desire. I will work together with you and your provincial government to achieve that. Thank you.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS – EXTENDED TIME FOR QUESTIONS

Motion (by **Mr Elias Kapavore**) agreed to –

That so much of the *Standing Orders* be suspended as would prevent the Question Time this day being extended by 20 minutes.

Identify district provincial Roads in the Connect PNG Road Program

Mr JOHN BOITO – Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to represent my people of Obura-Wonenara.

12/07

My questions are directed to the Minister for Works and Highways. Before I ask the question, I would like to thank the Marape/Rosso Government for recognising the roads in the country. Many governments in the past have come and gone and they have allocated funds for roads but there was no Connect PNG Program for connecting the missing links.

However, can the Minister inform the Honourable Members in this House about the roads that were chosen to connect:

- (1) PNG?
- (2) The missing links?

(3) The provincial roads? And,

(4) The district roads so that all of us can put money into same area without confusion?

Thank you.

Mr SOLAN MIRISIM – Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. I thank the good Member for Obura-Wonenara for his questions. I will get back to my Department and advise the Secretary and the officers to identify them and I will distribute a copy each to you all. If I want to present it, then I have to make it as a Ministerial Statement but we don't have enough time so I will put the list in an envelope and distribute them so that you all are aware of the roads in the districts, provinces and the country as a whole. Those that are not on the list will be included when we complete those missing links that are on the list. If not, the districts and provinces can make counterpart funding to those economic roads which are not captured in the list.

So, this government will put a lot money under the provincial roads and district infrastructures so we will look into that.

Thank you.

K52 Million share payment for Milne Bay Provincial Government

Mr GORDON WESLEY – Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. Whilst having this opportunity, I'd like to first of all, take this time to acknowledge the people of Milne Bay for having confidence in me to lead them in this 11th Parliament.

Mr Assistant Speaker, I'd like to direct my series of questions to the Minister for State Enterprises but unfortunately, he is absent so I will redirect it to the Honourable Prime Minister.

When will the National Government pay out Milne Bay Provincial Government K52 million share payment from the previous oil palm company in Milne Bay that has been held with Kumul Consolidated Holdings for many years?

Mr Assistant Speaker, for over many years, successive Members, provincial governments and governors have followed up on a long overdue share payment from the oil palm business activities currently held by the Kumul Consolidated Holdings Limited. We are aware that the National Executive Council has resolved to make a payment of K52 million on to the Milne Bay Provincial Government as share payment which have been outstanding going back decades.

13/07

Mr Assistant Speaker, my questions to the Prime Minister are: -

(1) Can the Prime Minister assure the people of Milne Bay Province and my government that this will be paid without delay?

(2) When will this be and if not, why? It's been a long time.

Thank you Mr Assistant Speaker.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Thank you Mr Assistant Speaker, I just want to thank the Governor of Milne Bay for asking this question.

Firstly, let me apologise for the non-presence of our Minister. He sent in his apologies, as he is attending to an urgent matter dealing with Air Niugini, therefore, he is not in Parliament at the moment.

On the question that the Governor raised, I do sincerely apologize on behalf of the past Government when I was Finance Minister and the present Government for delaying remittance of what is due to your province. In fact, last year we undertook the history surrounding what is owed to Milne Bay and Oro provinces as a result of transfer of these Oil Palm shares. The shares were held in trust by KCH and it was affirmed that we owed the provinces some money for the transaction that took place dating back ten years ago.

I want to assure you and the Provincial Government and the people of Milne Bay that what is owed to you will be paid to you once we find some money and put together at the very earliest and send to you. We will send the money to you in cash or in kind.

Mr Assistant Speaker, Oro Province is working with us also. We owe them a similar amount, and there is a conversation going that KCH is not able to fully transfer cash so we are looking at transfer of assets in kind across to the province. So these conversations are happening with Oro Province at the moment.

At the same time, we welcome you to the office for State Owned Enterprise and ourselves and we will assist you progress this matter that belongs to your people and to your province.

Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker.

Sale of uncultivated land in Amazon Bay, Abau District

Sir PUKA TEMU – Thank you Mr Assistant Speaker. I wish to ask my question to the Honourable Minister for Oil Palm and I want to congratulate him for his appointment. He is the right person to be appointed on this very important subsector of agriculture

Mr Assistant Speaker, before I ask the question, I would like the Prime Minister to take note since the Minister for Lands is not here. My question is in relation to an advertisement made by the New Britain Palm Oil Company on the 4 of November 2022 on the sale of four portions of uncultivated land in Amazon Bay in the Abau District.

In 2007 the company approached me as Member for Abau to look at the possibility of developing oil palm and exchanging from Milne Bay to Amazon Bay where we share a border. We granted this land in 2008, with a 99-year lease.

On the advertisement on the 4 of November 2022, they advertised to sell this portion of land that was meant to be for oil palm. There are four portions, with 278 hectares, 802 hectares, 3298 hectares and 973 hectares, a total of 5351.29 hectares intended for New Britain Palm Oil whom we gave the title to and now they have advertised on the 4 of November to sell this land.

14/07

Mr Assistant Speaker, on behalf of the landowners that own this enormous uncultivated land, negotiated for oil palm with this honourable company, whom have now got a title and are going to sell this land.

Mr Assistant Speaker, with our government policy of empowering land owners and the Deputy Prime Minister initiative in granting the landowners State lease so that they are empowered to negotiate development.

Mr Assistant Speaker, can I ask the Honourable Minister for Oil Palm to discuss with the Minister for Lands for us to achieved our ultimate goal of getting this land with the State lease to the people rather than somebody else buying it, which was originally intended for oil palm.

Can the Minister make an intervention or representation to the company so that we resolve this before it is sold to companies?

Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker.

Mr FRANCIS MANAKE – Thank you, Member for Abau, Honourable Sir Puka Temu, through you Mr Assistant Speaker, as it is, I am going to see the NBP Oil today and enquire on the status of the land and why are they selling it.

Most importantly, if it is State land then I think there is a process to follow. If it's been held over time, it has to be forfeited and make available for any developer to develop. And if its customary land with title, and I know the first person to be given back the title or ownership as the customary landowners as I understand.

But as for the question, I will take it up myself and discuss the very importance of this land and we can be able to utilize whatever programs we will do today.

The land alienation fund that is now made available to the Lands Department for the Honourable Members is important for development of oil palm and any other developments in town. The Government is going to make available lands so that we can be able to access developments in agriculture or any land development in urban centers.

But otherwise, Sir Puka Temu through you Mr Assistant Speaker, I will take it as my business to ensure I have more information on that and advise you as soon as I get the appropriate information on that piece of land.

Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker.

Invitation for Minister for Trade to Chimbu

Mr JAMES NOMANE – Mr Assistant Speaker, thank you, for recognizing the people of Chuave, before I ask my question to the Minister for Trade and Investment, Honorable Richard Maru.

I take this opportunity to say thank you to the people of Chuave for voting me into the 11th Parliament and congratulations to my fellow members. I recognized that many good men have come before me and will come after, but I take this opportunity to salute the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Opposition Leader and I find myself fortunate to be amongst you in this House.

Mr Assistant Speaker, my question is with respect to the special economic zone program and the initiatives of the Marape/Rosso Government. I just want to advise the House that we have a very unique situation in Chimbu right now. The seven MPs of Chimbu under the auspicious of our good Governor have achieved political committee.

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We are all in one accord and we embrace the program and are here to ask the Minister when he will come to Karamui in Simbu Province to advise us of a way forward.

After 47 years of independence we have seen that our road to development has been floundering and a lot of this has been because of failed leadership in the province. We have been at odds with each other we have not been able to agree with each other but today I would like to announce the Honorable House that Simbu we have come to the 11th Parliament as one. We see that the way forward under our good Governor is through leveraging our assets. Sepik

you have the Sepik plains, Morobe you might have Markham but Simbu we have Karamui and we feel we must embrace programs Special Economic zones and invite the good minister and his team and our friends from the Japanese Development Institute to come to Karamui first as the first point of call.

Simbu we are ready to partner up with the Marape-Rosso Government to bring us out of the rural enclaves that we have been in for the last 47 years and improve the living conditions of our people in Simbu through Karamui and therefore, effectively contribute to nation building. My question to the good Minister is, when do you plan to come to Karamui because we are ready to receive you.

Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker.

Mr RICHARD MARU – Thank you Mr Assistant Speaker, and I thank the Member for Chuave for this very important statement.

Chimbu is friendly united and we are all very happy to hear that. We are planning for our Japanese friends to arrive next Tuesday and our team will assemble and certainly Chimbu and Karamui will be the first district and province we will visit.

I want to give an undertaking on this Floor of Parliament that I will make sure that as soon as we have the flights sorted out, we will advise you and the Governor all the leaders of Chimbu when we will be visiting, most likely at the end of next week and I will be there in person.

Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker.

Kokoda Trail Tourism Status

Mr POWES PARKOP – Thank you Assistant Speaker for giving me the opportunity to ask these series of questions. I have six questions to the Minister for Culture and Tourism relating to the Kokoda Trail and the Minister will find that he can answer it in one or two replies.

(1) What is the Papua New Guinea Tourism Promotion Authority's position on Kokoda Trail as a major tourist product and as a strategy for attracting tourists into our country?

(2) What step or strategy is TPA taking to promote and leverage this very important tourist product to promote tourism in industry in PNG?

(3) How many roadshows or promotions TPA has undertaken or plans to undertake or hold in Australia to promote Kokoda Trail entice Australia to walk visit various sites on the

trail or participate in various activities along the trail as a commemoration of the second world war?

(4) Would your ministry and PNGTPA agree to recognize and celebrate the Kokoda day which is celebrated in Australia on the 3rd of November 2022 as part of strategy to promote Kokoda Trail and as a strategy to promote tourism in PNG

(5) What plans if any, does your ministry and PNGTPA have to celebrate the deeds of Papuan Infantry Battalion, New Guinea Infantry Battalion in the epic battle of Kokoda and again to leverage it to promote this very important product and tourism generally in our country.

(6) Is there any discussion going on between PNGTPA and your ministry and the ministry of environment and conservation to move the Kokoda Initiative away from CEPA to PNGTPA. That question essentially Assistant Speaker, the Kokoda Initiative is a tourist initiative not a conservation and it should not be part of CEPA.

Just a small context to this Mr Assistant Speaker, PNGTPA is going to China, Europe all over the world to promote tourism. What are the chances of tourist coming from China, Europe and America coming to PNG?

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What are the chances of tourist from China, Europe and America coming to PNG? As for Australia they are most likely to come and if we promote the trail for Australians to come then everybody might feel more comfortable to come to PNG. One way to generate income is through tourism. Thankyou Mr Assistant Speaker.

Mr ISI HENRY LEONARD – Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker, for allowing me to take this question and I thank the Governor for National Capital District for raising these important and significant questions especially in this time. I will attend to all the question one at a time.

The first question was on what was the PNG Tourism Promotion Authority's position on the Kokoda Trail as a major tourism and a strategy for attracting tourist to our country.

Now Kokoda Trail is an iconic tourism product for PNG and it has significant wartime history attached to it. It is a 96-kilometer stretch from Central Province to Oro Province in which the allied forces fought against the Japanese invasion.

And Tourism Promotion Authority (TPA) always maintains that Kokoda Trail is number one tourism product in PNG. It gives the numbers in terms of tourist arrivals to PNG and of course contributes to the economy and spin-off benefits to the communities along the Kokoda

Track as well as PNG as a whole. On average Kokoda Trail itself attracts 4,000 tourists specifically from Australian source markets every year to experience the tough terrain as a pilgrimage to honour those who fought the battle of the Kokoda.

TPA has and will continue to assist the locals along the track to improve the quality of the tourism product and services along the track with the very limited funding that TPA gets annually. Now, COVID-19 actually devastated the track in terms of tourism over the two-year period from 2019 to 2020.

Most of the local tourism operators actually closed their operations due to the no tourist walking the track. Now during that period TPA in an assessment of the product and services along the track identified the common issues and initiated activities to address some of these issues such as the Kokoda accommodation classification system (ACS) safe traveler program to mitigate the risk of COVID-19, the Kokoda tour operator survey then the Kokoda toilet and shower project and the main villages along the track. And also, the Kokoda 80th Anniversary Commemoration.

What steps of strategies is TPA taking to promote and leverage this important tourist product to promote the tourism industry in PNG? The enhancement of Kokoda tourism products aims to ensure that basic soft infrastructure required by tourist along the trail is accessible to make the experience easy while skipping the ambitions of the product. Now this is inclusive of (a) ACS and this system ensures that the basic backpacker accommodation is met by service providers along the track.

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When you bring people from other places, you must treat them well and make sure that the service provided for the tourists is important. So, we have to make sure that minimum standards are met so not only will they enjoy the trekking but especially when it comes to the hospitality aspect of the project, it is important.

Safe traveler Papua New Guinea is travel and safety of the tourism industry of Papua New Guinea that integrates into the tourism business operations to ensure we mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission. It gives us that platform not only for COVID-19 but for other diseases to address health issues.

Kokoda Tour Project Survey was conducted to establish the needs and current limitations experienced by our tour operators on the Kokoda Trail.

We have now identified where Government intervention is required to enhance these tourism products so our tour operators are very important`. We need to capture that also.

They can provide that service up to standard so that tourism is leveraged up to that level. How many roadshows or promotions has TPA undertaken or plans to undertake in Australia and promote Kokoda Trail and entice Australians to walk or visit various sites or participate in various activities related to the Kokoda Campaign or the Second World War?

The Kokoda Trail itself was birthed out of World War II. It is a narrative, as you walk that trail, it will give you a lot of meaning and purpose to that track. Without a narrative, that track is meaningless. Australia remain the tourism source of PNG. Why Australia? Why Kokoda track? That is where blood was shed during the war. The Australian lost their lives on that track.

Mr Belden Namah – Point of Order! The Minister is making a Ministerial Statement. He should be answering the question and get straight to the point. If he wants to make a ministerial statement, he can do it at a later date.

Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker.

Mr ASSISTANT SPEAKER – Thank you, Honourable Member, for Vanimo-Green. Your point of order is in order. Minister, respond to the questions.

Mr ISI HENRY LEONARD – Let me continue, total arrivals from Australia is more than 50 per cent. Now, we have undertaken numerous marketing and promotional activities over the years, and we continue to do so into the future.

We have recently observed and commemorated the Kokoda 80th Anniversary in November, just a few weeks ago. The campaign is ongoing and will be rolled out next year. There are a number of activities to be undertaken; one is to partner with Air Niugini to offer special fares on extended Kokoda Track trips which will commence in February to June, 2023.

Mr James Donald – Point of Order! Mr Assistant Speaker, you ruled that the Member for Vanimo-Greens, Point of Order is in order so you haven't made your ruling to the Minister. Will he continue or he should stop?

(Laughter-in-the-Chamber)

Mr ASSISTANT SPEAKER – Thank you, Member for North-Fly. Minister, you need to answer the questions that the Governor for NCD asked.

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Mr ISI HENRY LEONARD - We are making efforts to promote Kokoda Track in Australia, and using Australia to leverage tourism and to promote and attract tourists to come and walk the track.

In regards to the question about my Ministry and TPA agree to recognise the Kokoda Day and celebrate it on the 3 November in Australia as part of this strategy to promote tourism in the country. We celebrated the Fuzzy Wuzzy Day with the Australians and promoted it when we go to Kokoda. That is an ongoing annual program. The Australians and the Papua New Guineans come together and celebrate the Fuzzy Wuzzy and ANZAC Day in Kokoda.

What plans does your Ministry have –

Mr ASSISTANT SPEAKER – Honourable Minister, instead of you answering the questions like you are reading a ministerial statement, you can put in writing and answer the questions of the Governor of NCD.

Mr ISI HENRY LEONARD – I will now conclude the answers to these questions. TPA will continue to support and assist through its three agencies; the National Museum, Tourism Promotion Authority and the National Cultural Commission to help develop tourism, especially the Kokoda Track.

The Kokoda Track is an iconic program. If we harness it, it will be one of those products in this country, that can elevate tourism to the next level. Thank you.

Mr ASSISTANT SPEAKER – Honourable members, the Question Time for 20 minutes has expired. I will ask the Minister for Civil Aviation and Transport to answer some of the important questions that he needs to answer.

ANSWERS TO PREVIOUS QUESTIONS

Update on Balimo Airport construction and completion

Mr WALTER SCHNAUBELT – I seek leave to make an official response to the Member for Delta – Fly’ questions earlier this week.

Leave granted.

Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. Firstly, I would like to correct what I said earlier when I announced that RAA stands for Rural Airstrip Association. However, it stands for Rural Airstrip Agency.

The Rural Airstrip Agency (RAA) is not a party to the upgrade of the Balimo Airstrip into becoming a proposed airport. The RAA has only been involved in maintenance up-keep of the Balimo Airstrip to minimum civil aviation safety standards of unpaved aerodromes, (AC Part 139-6) since 2018.

The Balimo Airstrip is serviced by third level airline operators, primarily for purposes of service delivery needs in the area, such as the area health patrols, et cetera. Tropic Air, SIL, Strickland Bosavi Foundation are the only other operators that are known to frequent the airstrip.

In relation to the first question by the Honourable Member for Delta – Fly, given that Ok Tedi Mining has been and still is the biggest revenue earner in the country, can the National Government direct NAC to upgrade the status of Balimo Airport and recognize it as an airport instead of an airstrip, since it is located in the New Delta Fly District Headquarters?

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Mr Assistant Speaker, the National Government appreciates the importance of the Balimo Airstrip and the strategic location the Balimo Airstrip is situated however the National Government is also aware of the Airstrip's legacy issues which prevents, the National Government taking any steps to upgrade it to a National Airport. The reasons being that:

Existing State Contract

- There is already an existing State Contract number CSTB 2497 valued K32,998,790.00 (GST inclusive) for the upgrading of the Balimo Airport entered between the State and a company called Eda Civil Works Limited (the contractor) on February 7, 2013.

- The Contract is yet to be fully performed.

(ii) Various National Court Proceedings and Stay Order from the Supreme Court

- The contract was awarded by the O'Neil/Dion government to the contractor, however, due to non-payment of the contractual amount, the work ceased.

- In 2015, the contractor instituted Court proceedings stay WS#1141 of 2015 against the State for the non-payment of the contractual amount, plus variation and loss of business (the 2015 Court proceedings).

- In or about 28 September 2020, after a Court annexed mediation in a related Court proceeding stay OS#40 OF 2020 (Related proceedings), parties reached an agreement called Hilton Heads of Agreement (the Agreement) to settle.

- On 21 October 2020, the Marape/Basil Government made a NEC Decision No. 327/2020 to settle the outstanding amount and for the contractor to return to site and complete the contract.

- The parties entered into a Consent Order and the National Court endorsed the order on November 2, 2020 (Order) in the related proceedings.

- Subsequently, the contractor was paid K21, 249,895.98 by the Board of Trustee of the Western Province Non CMCAI People's Dividend Trust Account.

- In 2021, the Fly River Provincial Government appealed the Order in the proceedings stay SCA#145 OF 2020 (Supreme Court Appeal) and on 28 June 2021, obtained a Stay Order. Because of the Stay Order the 2015 Court proceedings has been stayed as well.

- The Supreme Court Appeal has not been concluded as yet. Depending on the outcome of the Supreme Court Appeal, the contractor will either complete the contract or cease altogether.

(iii) Assessment of the Viability of the upgrade of the Airstrip

- If the various Court proceedings goes in favour of the contractor and it cease completing the contract altogether, the National Government through the shareholders of National Airports Corporation (NAC) can request the Board of the NAC to instruct the Management of NAC to provide an assessment of the viability of the Balimo airstrip being upgraded to an airport.

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If the various Court proceedings goes in favour of the Contractor and it cease completing the Contract altogether, the National Government through the shareholders of National Airports Corporation (NAC) can request the Board of the NAC to instruct the Management of NAC to provide an assessment of the viability of the Balimo airstrip being upgraded to an airport.

Mr Assistant Speaker, can the Marape/Rosso Government step in to fund the Balimo airport project completion, possibly through the ADB loan like all the other major airport infrastructures in the country, and have it included in the National Budget.

Mr Assistant Speaker, the answer to that is NO, the National Government cannot fund the Balimo Airport Project completion;

(1) Based on the same reasons I have outlined earlier. To do so might amount to:

(1) Subjudice contempt; and

(2) double funding the same project. And we have to try to avoid that we have to wait for the Courts to deliberate on these matters first and foremost.

(2) It depends on the outcome of Court proceedings and also the outcome of the study of pilot airstrips from CADIP II

(1) On the other hand, if after the Court's deliberation and the contractor ceases work altogether, the Balimo Airstrip will have to wait for the four (4) pilot airstrips upgrade (to all-weather standard) projects under the current MOA between Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the National Government CADIP II to be completed and a study to be prepared on developing a program to expand the upgrading of rural airstrips to all-weather standard.

(2) After the program is developed, then consultation would have to be done through collaboration with NAC, CASA, Rural Airstrip Agency and other stakeholders regarding the upgrade of the Balimo Airstrip to all-weather standard or National Airport status.

Mr Assistant Speaker, once funding is secured and made available by the National Government, can the NAC make its business to have their engineers based on the ground to ensure successful completion according to the scope of works.

Mr Assistant Speaker, my answers to the two (2) earlier questions effectively answers this question as well.

I will forward now a copy of this official response to my good honourable member for Delta Fly so that he has this document in his possession to then further action it.

Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker.

NATIONAL CULTURAL COMMISSION - NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY 2022 TO 2032 – PAPER AND STATEMENT – MOTION TO TAKE NOTE OF PAPER

Mr ISI HENRY LEONARD (Samarai-Murua – Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture) – Pursuant to statute I present the National Cultural Policy 2022 to 2032 of the National Cultural Commission.

I ask leave of Parliament to make a statement in connection with the Report.

Leave granted

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Mr Assistant Speaker, allow me to start by thanking you for giving me the opportunity to present to this House, the development of a policy on culture. Before I elaborate on this policy on culture, let me take this time to thank the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Honourable James Marape for retaining me as the Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture, under the Marape/Rosso Government in the 11th Parliament. Let me also thank the National Executive Council and the government for endorsing the National Cultural Policy 2022 – 2032 in the 10th Parliament. Prime Minister, thank you once again for officiating the official launching of the National Cultural Policy 2022 – 2032 on the 9 of June at APEC Haus.

Mr Assistant Speaker, as Honourable Members may recall, not so long ago, I delivered a similar ministerial statement for the Tourism Promotion Authority in the last Parliament, but this time my presentation is on the achievement of another important government agency under my Ministry; that agency is the National Cultural Commission.

Mr Assistant Speaker, the policy being presented to Parliament today is the National Cultural Policy, 2022-2032, which has been approved and endorsed by the National Executive Council. It is a remarkable achievement for my Ministry and the National Cultural Commission. It is a home-grown policy and certainly one that was developed without engaging expensive consultants. I can confirm to this House, that this policy is the first of its kind for the cultural sector since Papua New Guinea attained independence, and also first ever cultural policy in the Pacific region, including Australia and New Zealand.

Mr Assistant Speaker, I am very privileged to have been associated with the development of this policy. When I was appointed the Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture in December 2020, it soon became apparent to me from the briefings that nil policy on culture exists.

The net results of this policy vacuum have seen;

- (1) Policy and legal inconsistencies affecting enforcement and monitoring of cultural properties,
- (2) Collaboration and coordination between cultural agencies and stakeholders lacking and needing improvement,
- (3) Unclear demarcation of roles and responsibilities of cultural institutions,
- (4) Lack of attention in long term government development plans on culture,
- (5) Absence of sector policy on culture,
- (6) Ad hoc approach to cultural services delivery, and
- (7) Lack of funding and capacity building issues.

Mr Assistant Speaker, this cultural policy addresses failures of the past governments. The protecting, safeguarding, developing and promoting of our cultural heritage is a constitutional mandate but these have taken a back seat over the years. Nevertheless, the policy addresses some perennial issues which have hindered the growth of the cultural sector.

The main ones are;

(1) Successive Governments since independence have failed to develop a cultural policy for Papua New Guinea, thus, this policy is a first of its kind under the Marape/Rosso Government,

(2) No prominence was given to the cultural sector in the main government plans (Medium Term Development Plan, PNG Vision 2050) resulting with development of arts and culture lacking behind other sectors,

(3) Insufficient funding allocations in annual budgets have hampered cultural services delivery and capacity development.

(4) Failure to recognize the important role that arts and culture play in the economy of the country, contributing to economic growth, employment creation, and eradication of poverty,

(5) Failure to recognize in policy that our cultures are the main tourism products that needs government intervention, and

(6) Failure to encourage development of provincial cultural development plans.

In short Mr Assistant Speaker, our cultural heritage, which is the backbone of this nation, receives far less priority in our development plan. For instance, pillar six in the PNG Vision 2050 paid scant attention to culture and nothing constructive is shown in either the Medium-Term Development Plan three or Papua New Guinea Development Strategic Plan 2010 - 2030.

This is a far cry from what the *Constitution* has been urging us to do, particularly, goal five of the National Goals and Directive Principles advocates that;

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(a) Our 'Development should take place primarily through the use of Papua New Guinean forms of social, political and economic organization', and

(b) The cultural, commercial, and ethnic diversity of our people is a positive strength, and for the fostering of respect for, and appreciation of, traditional ways of life and culture, including language, in all their richness and variety, as well as for a willingness to apply these ways dynamically and creatively for the tasks of development. "

Mr Assistant Speaker, I must emphatically declare before this House that we have failed in realizing the huge potential that our cultural heritage offers in the development aspirations of our nation. We cannot go begging after others to do things for us but must master the necessary resources and the courage to address development agendas in our cultural plans.

We as Members of Parliament, the Government, and equally our people, and the cultural institutions and stakeholders must work together to show that we care about the survival and transmission of our culture and traditions. This cultural policy offers us the opportunity to do just that. Let me reiterate that the National Cultural Policy is about giving prominence to culture. Towards this end, the intent and scope of this policy are threefold;

First, it attempts to identify and set the stage to give prominence with increased recognition and continued support for, and by, the government in order to build a sustainable future for an active and thriving cultural and creative industry. The richness and diversity of our culture can be the steppingstone for a growing cultural tourism industry when culture and arts are performed, exhibited, and marketed.

Second, the policy attempts to identify the many challenges of protecting, safeguarding, preserving, developing, and promoting Papua New Guinea's arts and cultures through updated cultural laws, better storage and retrieval systems, through education and literature, and by way of public awareness. It highlights the governance and ongoing administrative issues and management setbacks, which have been major impediments to the development of our arts and culture.

Third, the policy provides a clear strategy for the Government and stakeholders to implement, in order to accomplish the objectives and outcomes that are set out in this document.

Mr Assistant Speaker, Papua New Guinea has been undergoing significant change and transformation since early contact with outsiders. Over the years the impact on our cultures and traditional social systems have been massive. We have embraced ideas, education, religion, entertainment, technology, etc., in the aftermath of the country modernizing and interacting with the wider world, but these have come with dire consequences to our indigenous people and societies.

Changes are inevitable but we as a nation, on one hand, must rise up as one to ensure the protection and preservation of our cultural heritage, which was unselfishly passed down to us by our ancestors, and on the other, develop and promote this heritage to benefit us. We have a duty to ensure that this heritage survives for future generations with adequate intervention measures.

Mr Assistant Speaker, in a nutshell, this is what this policy is all about, providing guidance for the government in some vital areas of cultural service delivery and development.

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Mr Assistant Speaker, the overall policy framework is set out to achieve the following aims:

- (1) Provide linkage between culture and development plans,
- (2) Provide a common platform for all cultural development players to interact,
- (3) Align legislation, policy and plan for effective delivery of cultural services which currently are disjointed,
- (4) Provide strategies for stakeholder's active involvement,
- (5) Establish strong working relationships with subnational governments and administrations (Provincial Governments, District Development Authorities and Local-Level Governments),
- (6) Ensure critical enablers play their role in delivery of cultural services, and
- (7) Provide the framework for economic growth in the cultural and creative industries.

In order to achieve these aims, the cultural policy focuses on four main outcome areas.

These are:

- Production and performance of arts and culture,
- Promotion and marketing of arts and culture,
- Safeguarding and transmission of arts and culture, and,
- Governance and capacity building of cultural institutions,

Mr Assistant Speaker, the main thrust under the first policy outcome is to create interest among the people of this nation regarding their culture. It encourages people to continue practicing their culture, holding festivals, and exhibiting their specific cultural products.

The second policy outcome area concerns the development of the cultural and creative industries in PNG by applying the governments' agenda of developing the micro small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector. This policy area addresses how best Papua New Guinea's arts and culture can be promoted and marketed using the nations mass media and by creating specific market spaces for the sale of our diverse cultural products.

The third policy outcome is designed to ensure the protection of our tangible and intangible cultural heritage and the collection, storage and retrieving of cultural information.

The fourth policy outcome area is proposed to ensure that governance and institutional mechanisms are improved and that institutional capacities in areas of infrastructure, humane resource and financing are strengthened in order to make delivery of cultural services more efficient, productive and effective.

Mr Assistant Speaker, the nation stands to benefit from this cultural policy. However, we know also that very little gain is made when we focus only for the sake of protecting and safeguarding. Therefore, it's imperative that we also permit access to utilize this cultural heritage for economic growth in the cultural and creative industries as alluded in the first two policy outcome areas mentioned. Simply, our cultures are a valuable asset, a sustainable resource available to every member of our communities to participate and enjoy the benefits thereof.

On this point, Mr Assistant Speaker, let me remind all of us in this House that our diverse cultures and arts are tourism products attracting over half of the visitors to our shores. Globally, the cultural tourism market according to a recent World Bank report is valued at US\$453billion which PNG can tap into with vigorous promotion and marketing strategies in order to attract foreign tourists.

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This huge monetary figure alone illustrates the importance of culture and its contribution to the national economy.

Papua New Guinea is diverse a cultural attraction that can bring in tourist money. We speak one-third of the world's total languages which is indicative of the diversity of many cultures around us yet we are way behind others as a major tourism destination. Why that is so, because there are fundamental issues that need addressing by the Government and everyone else.

The National Cultural Policy is result-driven with clear sector priorities and development plans. It is the intent of the policy to offer clear directions in planning and prioritizing cultural service delivery and development in the country. Equally, we want the culture to be realized for its value and worth towards communities and its contributions to nation-building. Our goal for this policy is clear, that is making culture the foundation for economic development because of its sustainable attributes and ever-present characteristics in all communities for sharing and enjoyment.

Mr Assistant Speaker, policies are worthless if the government fails to implement them. Hence, the government's intervention especially the allocating of funds to carry out the

programs and activities over the next 10 years is crucial. Funding this policy will cost K20 million per year or K200 million over 10 years.

Over the years, the cultural sector received negligible attention as shown by the lack of funding commitment. In fact, annual budget allocation to cultural institutions has always remained below one percent of the country's GDP compared with that of other sectors.

Mr Assistant Speaker, don't you think this House today should agree to give prominence to culture by increasing funding to the cultural sector? Certainly, K200million over 10 years should not be too cumbersome for the nation.

In summary, I emphasize again the importance of our cultures and traditions. The onus is on each and every one of us in this House to provide leadership that is seen to promote our rich cultural heritage and ensure that this heritage is preserved and has a sustainable future. It is time we give our utmost priority to the cultural sector, we can do so by recognizing the importance of culture in our lives and the communities by implementing this policy.

Mr Assistant Speaker, let me speak a little about the National Cultural Commission as I have learned that this important cultural agency was once run-down and headed for its demise. That is old history now so to speak.

We can be assured today that NCC's problems are over as it has under new management picked itself up and worked tirelessly to restore pride, trust, credibility, and excellence back to its administration and work over the last three years. This House can be assured that NCC is now in capable hands with a better outlook for the future, under the current management regimes.

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Such is the National Cultural Commission positive progress over the last three years, that the Department of Personnel Management recognized its achievements in awarding to it the inaugural best performing agency head award in January 2022.

Over the three years, the National Cultural Commission has been associated with delivering 77 cultural shows and festivals in the provinces. Its efforts to even reach remote areas and working with local communities and promoting shows, has become a catalyst for development, and likewise in some remote places, the National Cultural Commission's presence brings together communities which have been separated by hostilities.

Mr Assistant Speaker, in order for the policy to receive some measures of success in its implementation, the National Cultural Commission is aware of the important collaborative role of critical enablers, already conveniently covered by the national cultural policy.

One missing link that should be providing critical interface between various stakeholders, is an advisory body that advises the Minister. Hence, my Ministry will work with the government to establish a Cultural Advisory Council, which will function to provide advice to the government and stakeholders on matters affecting arts and culture in Papua New Guinea.

Mr Assistant Speaker, such is the importance of critical enablers that the National Cultural Commission is seriously taking the necessary step to partner with provincial governments as the key drivers of this policy at the provincial level. Our provincial governments are responsible for cultural development in their respective provinces, linking with the local level governments, DDAs and the local communities.

After all, our local communities are the source of our cultural traditions and therefore, culture should be promoted at their level to attract visitors and participation, and importantly, ensuring these traditions are safeguarded and preserved through the various mode of cultural expressions and transmission.

With this policy, Mr Assistant Speaker, the National Cultural Commission will be working with provinces to revive and develop provincial cultural centres, and it will ensure that each province has a provincial cultural development plan.

At around the time of Papua New Guinea's Independence and soon after, several cultural centers were operating in provinces. Except for Enga Cultural Centre (Takeanda), that had started in 1974, and which has survived to this day with responsible management and very modern facilities, most others have ceased to exist. Such is the importance of promoting our cultures in the provinces that the government will be investing money in cultural development programs and activities there.

Mr Assistant Speaker, the National Cultural Commission for the purpose of engaging the provinces has started signing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with them. To date, the National Cultural Commission has signed MoUs with three provinces for the delivery of cultural services.

And taking this opportunity, I wish to acknowledge and congratulate the Central Provincial Government, Milne Bay Provincial Government, Enga Provincial Government, Madang Provincial Government and West New Britain Provincial Government for recognizing the importance of partnership towards cultural service delivery and taking the path for cultural development in their respective provinces. Other provinces are encouraged to follow the initiative taken by the five esteemed provincial governments and engage with the National Cultural Commission for productive collaborations.

Mr Assistant Speaker, I can confidently assure Parliament that the development of this cultural policy met all the pre-requisite processes of policy development. From background research to institutional problem analysis, the National Cultural Commission's policy team has held provincial and regional consultations. Moreover, the policy was peer-reviewed by a number of reputable local and international experts before being endorsed by the National Cultural Commission Board and presented for stakeholders' validation.

On Wednesday 20 April 2022, the cultural policy was approved and endorsed by the National Executive Council after vetting by the Central Agencies Coordinating Committee.

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Mr Assistant Speaker, as Minister responsible I am glad that a cultural policy has finally been developed under my watch. It is another one of the many positive achievements of the Marape-Rosso Government. It is therefore only proper that I take this opportunity to thank the Prime Minister for having the confidence in me. I wish to also acknowledge the leadership of Mr. Steven Enomb Kilanda, the Executive Director of National Cultural Commission whose resolute persistence made sure that the Policy Team at NCC delivers the policy. It took close to two years for the development of this document. Congratulations to all involved and thank you to all the stakeholders who have contributed

Mr Assistant Speaker, I will end by reaffirming that the Marape-Rosso Government fully supports the development of this policy, and has guaranteed that government funding will be made available for its implementation over the ten-year period.

This cultural policy highlights an exceptional achievement that is worth reporting in the People's House.

Mr Assistant Speaker, let me conclude by saying this, on Tuesday I went and officiated the opening of a cultural festival held at Abau. There, more than 7 tribes of people gathered to celebrate their culture from children up to the elderly folks. Nothing else but their culture. The tone, dance, chant and the way of life. There is hope and we still have a culture. This policy will drive that culture, monetise that culture and realise its economic potential. Let's embrace it and use our culture as one of the pillars for economic development in this country for our people to benefit.

Thank you.

Motion – That the question be now put – agreed to.

Motion – That the Parliament take note of the Paper – agreed to.

Paper Noted.

Mr LUTHER WENGE – Point of Order! Mr Assistant Speaker, can you explain to me when a question is put can Members of parliament debate?

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Mr ASSISTANT SPEAKER –Honorable Governor for Morobe resume your seat and I will explain. Honourable Members, the question was put, and Members agreed. So I entertained the motion. Therefore, there will be no debates.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Mr Assistant Speaker, I apologize for the inconveniences caused to the Governor of Morobe and others who want to debate this.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion (by **Mr James Marape**) agreed to –

That the Parliament do now adjourn.

The Parliament adjourned at 1.05 p.m.